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Smokehouse

by Jeffrey Harrison

Brick painted white on the outside, and inside
blackened by smoke, windowless, it stood
in the driveway's circle as if central to our lives
and not, as even in childhood we knew,
the vestige of a long-gone epoch, post-bellum,
now used only for storing rusty bicycles,
old grills, tires worn smooth, chipped flower pots,
bird feeders, shovels, rakes with bent prongs,
red dented gas can, green hoses coiled like snakes.

It scared my brothers and me to unlatch the door
that was one shade darker than the yews that flanked it
and grew shaggier, taller, and more shadowy each year,
but one time, playing hide and seek, I crept
into that dim cell smelling of dank ash,
cool even in summer, like a mausoleum,
and hung, as my eyes adjusted, with cobwebs,
wasp nests, and tattered snake skins---shivering,
heart pounding, praying to be found.

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